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March 2, 2007

To: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
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From: David E. Janssen
Chief Administrative Officer

WASHINGTON, D.C. UPDATE

Joint Briefing on Homelessness to the Congressional Delegation Staff

This is to advise your Board that the County, the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) will present a joint briefing on homeless issues to the County's Congressional staff on March 5, 2007. The briefing is in response to an invitation from Congressman Henry Waxman's staff. LAHSA will provide an overview of homelessness, the City will review housing issues and Flora Gil Krisiloff, Senior Field Deputy for the Third District, who chairs the deputies on homelessness, will discuss services provided to homeless persons in Los Angeles.

My office has worked closely with the City of Los Angeles, LAHSA, and Ms. Krisiloff to develop the attached briefing documents; Joint Federal Housing and Homeless Legislative Priorities (Attachment I) and Homelessness in the City and County of Los Angeles (Attachment II).

The priorities described in Attachment I regarding Homeless Assistance Programs, Section 8 Housing Vouchers, the National Affordable Housing Fund, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the Services for Ending Homelessness Act are consistent with your Board-adopted Federal legislative agenda.

Each Supervisor
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We believe this collaborative effort with the City and LAHSA will raise the awareness of our Congressional delegation of the issues and barriers we face in providing services to assist the thousands of homeless persons in Los Angeles.

We will continue to keep you advised.

DEJ:GK
MAL:VE:acn

Attachments

c: All Department Heads
Legislative Strategist



**HOMELESSNESS:
JOINT FEDERAL HOUSING AND HOMELESS LEGISLATIVE
PRIORITIES**

March 2007

The City of Los Angeles, the County of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) support the following Federal policies to provide housing and homeless services.

McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Program

- **Los Angeles 2007 Continuum of Care** - The County, City and LAHSA will work with the Los Angeles Congressional Delegation to support a successful level of grant awards to the Los Angeles community.
- **Appropriation** - Support an increased appropriation for the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
- **Reauthorization** - Support the reauthorization for the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act including provisions that:
 - Increase local discretion over the use of homeless assistance programs including supportive housing, supportive services, emergency services, and the Homeless Management Information System.
 - More equitably distribute funds based upon relative need.
 - Give priority for new permanent housing for the homeless population and permit the renewal of permanent housing contracts non-competitively.
 - Establish a realistic timeline for grant expenditures funding to support new construction or rehabilitation of buildings as supportive housing for homeless and chronically homeless persons.
 - Establish realistic timelines for application and award announcements that effectively reflect the needs of local continuum of care systems and their community-based organization partners.
 - Oppose any change to the service match requirements for community based organizations.
 - Oppose any proposal to block grant the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Program.

Section 8 Housing Vouchers

- **Appropriation** - Support an increased appropriation for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) with direction to HUD to protect and improve the Section 8 program by:
 - Opposing the recapture of unspent voucher funds. This will increase the number of families receiving assistance by allowing Public Housing Authorities (PHA) which lost funding through the “snapshot” funding formula to increase their current lease-up rate to appropriate levels.
 - Opposing proposals which restrict the ability of PHAs to administer Section 8 housing programs or which impose costly new requirements that are not accompanied by additional resources to implement them.
 - Funding new incremental vouchers targeted to homeless veterans.
- **Authorization** - Support Section 8 reform legislation that would provide vouchers at reasonable rents for extremely low-income and disabled persons.
 - Support legislation that maintains the core elements of the Section 8 program while streamlining inspection and income verification requirements.
 - Oppose legislation which would restrict project-based Section 8 vouchers subsidies only to the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit rental limits
 - Support legislation that permanently replaces the budget-based funding mechanism of fiscal years 2004-2006 with a cost-based system such as that enacted by HJ Res. 20 that bases funding on more recent actual costs. The revised funding formula should allow PHAs to retain unspent reserves held in undesignated fund balance accounts and enable them to lease-up to their authorized caps.

National Affordable Housing Trust

- **Authorization** - Support legislation to enact a National Housing Trust Fund that would provide funding to increase the number of affordable housing units across the country.
 - Advocate for a fair share allocation of funding to Los Angeles that is reflective of community need.
 - Advocate for an allocation of funding that will provide housing to homeless and extremely low-income persons.

Homeless Services

- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** - Support legislation to reauthorize SAMHSA and provide increased funding for California and Los Angeles City and County.
- **Supportive Services** - Support S. 593, The Services for Ending Homelessness Act (SELHA) to provide funding for comprehensive supportive services to help persons in permanent supportive housing achieve stability.

Barriers to Serving the Homeless

- **Demonstration Project to Provide Interim SSI and Medicaid Benefits for Chronically Homeless Adults with Severe Mental Disabilities**

Many chronically homeless adults with severe mental disabilities would likely be eligible to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid benefits, but do not because they are unable to provide sufficient documentation of their mental disability and otherwise successfully navigate the SSI eligibility process. To qualify for SSI and Medicaid benefits, these adults must generally provide 12 months of mental health treatment documentation to substantiate their mental disability. Yet without these benefits, many of these individuals only receive sporadic or limited health and mental health care, and are generally unable to sustain stable housing. As a result of this “catch-22” situation, many of these individuals are never able to qualify for SSI and Medicaid, despite having a mental disability which would qualify them, if their disability could be adequately documented.

Los Angeles County is working with the Social Security Administration (SSA), which administers SSI and Medicaid for SSI recipients, to determine the feasibility of developing a demonstration project for chronically homeless adults with mental disabilities to receive interim SSI and Medicaid. Upfront receipt of SSI and Medicaid for a limited duration would facilitate the mental health treatment necessary to support a final SSI eligibility determination, create more housing options to stabilize such individuals during the months leading to a final SSI determination, and significantly contribute to permanently ending homelessness for many of these individuals.

- **Integration and Flexibility for Homeless Persons Needing Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment**

Serving persons who suffer from both mental illness and substance abuse is challenging, especially for homeless persons. Currently, federally funded mental health and substance abuse treatment programs are funded under separate block grants, apply different rules and regulations for service delivery, and require separate claiming for services provided to the same individual. This complicates service delivery and results in additional administrative burdens at the local level and reduces the ability to provide comprehensive services in an integrated approach for homeless persons.

- **Recuperative Care**

Recuperative care provides medical oversight for patients transitioning out of acute care hospitals. Services include, but are not limited to; wound care, medication monitoring, and assistance with activities of daily living, and monitoring of vital signs. Currently, these services are not covered under the Medicaid Program. Recuperative care is particularly critical for homeless Medicaid eligible individuals who need further treatment to fully recover from a physical injury or illness after an acute hospitalization. In 2005, 18 private hospitals and 5 public hospitals had a total of approximately 828 homeless patients needing recuperative bed services; however, only 43 recuperative beds are currently available in Los Angeles to serve 523 homeless patients annually. This leaves over at least 37% of the medically fragile homeless patients without any place to recuperate after an acute hospitalization. Access to recuperative care would help homeless individuals receive the support for their full recuperation and reduce repeat visits for hospital services. This service would also reduce costs for more expensive emergency room and acute care services. To partially address the need, the County of Los Angeles is partnering with private hospitals to secure an additional 45 recuperative beds for homeless. Specifically, through the Homeless Prevention Fund, the County has earmarked \$1,320,000 in one-time general funds to provide 15 of the additional 45 recuperative care beds for the homeless for a two year period.

- **Support Increased Flexible Funding and Service Integration for Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment Programs**

A significant number of homeless persons in Los Angeles County suffer from alcohol and substance abuse addiction. Untreated addictions may contribute to chronic homelessness. In recent years, the demand for alcohol and substance abuse treatment services has exceeded capacity. Of the total 63,157 clients receiving publicly funded alcohol and drug services in Los Angeles County in FY 2004-05, 11,494 (18%) of the program participants identified themselves as homeless. Alcohol and drug treatment services are funded from multiple sources with differing priorities, objectives, and fluctuations in total funding levels. In recent years, available funding for non-specific populations has declined because funds have been redirected to support programs targeted for specific client populations. This change in flexibility has reduced available funding for the general population, including the homeless. This adversely impacts the County's ability to expand its network of assessment, referral, and treatment services for our homeless population.



Homelessness in the City and County of Los Angeles

Homelessness in Los Angeles County

Los Angeles County has 88 incorporated cities and covers over 4,084 square miles. The County's population is 10,245,552: 9,152,644 residents live within the incorporated cities and 1,092,908 residents live in unincorporated areas. It is the largest urban county in the country.

On any given night, there are approximately 88,345 people homeless in Los Angeles County (2005 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count and counts from the Cities of Glendale, Pasadena and Long Beach).

The Continuum of Care

The Continuum of Care refers to the array of services and housing available to help homeless people move from homelessness to permanent housing. Each year, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development releases a competitive application for Continuum of Care funding. Continuum of Care funding consists of three programs:

- Supportive Housing Program (SHP) – funds transitional housing, permanent supportive housing and services only projects.
- Shelter Plus Care – pays a housing subsidy for homeless people with a disability. The applicant must match the value of the subsidy dollar for dollar with services.
- SRO Moderate Rehabilitation – pays for minor rehabilitation and ten year housing subsidies for Single Room Occupancy hotels.

In addition to specific project applications for these funds, applicants are required to provide:

- Quantitative and qualitative information regarding homelessness in their Continuum
- A plan to end chronic homelessness and any goals to end homelessness for other populations
- A biennial count of its homeless population
- An annual inventory of beds and services

- Documentation of a community-based planning effort to set goals and funding priorities

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority is the lead entity for the Los Angeles Continuum of Care. The Los Angeles Continuum of Care is comprised of all of Los Angeles County *except* the Cities of Glendale, Long Beach and Pasadena, each of which administer their own Continuum of Care.

Homeless Programs in the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (2006 Inventory)

- The Los Angeles Continuum of Care has 5,301 units of emergency housing, including 1,768 Winter Shelter beds, 1,108 units that serve families and 2,425 units for individuals.
- There are 3,318 transitional housing beds for families and 6,214 for individuals, bringing the total to 9,532 transitional housing units.
- A total of 8,544 units of permanent supportive housing including 731 units for chronically homeless persons, 3,938 units for families and 3,875 units for individuals.

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)

- A joint powers authority formed in 1993 by the City and County of Los Angeles, LAHSA is governed by a ten-member commission, 5 appointed by the Mayor of Los Angeles, and one appointed by each of the County's five Supervisors.
- LAHSA's Mission is to support, create and sustain solutions to homelessness in Los Angeles County by providing leadership, advocacy, planning, and management of program funding.
- LAHSA administers approximately \$60 million per year, managing over 250 contracts and operating a direct outreach program. LAHSA funds services and housing for homeless people, including the nation's largest winter shelter program, year-round emergency beds, transitional housing programs and permanent supportive housing. Services funded include employment programs, health care, mental health services and substance abuse programs serving a broad range of populations, including youth, individuals and families with children.
- LAHSA led the formation of the Los Angeles/Orange County Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Collaborative to implement a regional homeless management information system that was recognized by HUD in 2005 as an outstanding achievement in the field of HMIS implementation. The computer enterprise selected by the Collaborative focuses on tracking program outcomes, not simply activities, of HUD-funded homeless programs.
- Required by HUD, in response to a directive from Congress, communities across the country conduct a count of their homeless population. In 2005, LAHSA conducted the County's first enumeration; the 2007 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count is currently in progress, using 1,500 volunteers and hiring homeless people to help ensure as complete a count as possible.

The County of Los Angeles

- Overseen by a five member Board of Supervisors, the County of Los Angeles is responsible for the County's public health, health care, mental health care, social services, children and family services, adult and juvenile probation services, child support collection services, community and senior services, law enforcement for 40 cities and the unincorporated area, Countywide

correctional system, justices services through the District Attorney, Public Defender and Alternate Public Defender. The County operates income support programs, serving approximately 60,000 people on general relief each month, and over 365,000 people on CalWORKs (TANF). The County's Health Services provide over 2.5 million outpatient visits per year, nearly 300,000 emergency room visits and over 275,000 public health clinic visits. In addition to the general programs that are commonly used by homeless people, the County departments administer numerous programs targeting homeless people, including housing services for families on CalWORKs, mental health care programs for chronically homeless people, and substance abuse treatment. The County's foster care program operates facilities aimed at preventing homelessness among its emancipated foster youth population. Coordinated planning for homeless programs is facilitated by the County Chief Administrative Office, Service Integration Branch. In 2006, the County spent an estimated \$208 million on programs and services directly serving the homeless population. This includes the Homeless Prevention Initiative approved by the Board of Supervisors on April 4, 2006 which allocated \$16 million in new on-going County General Fund for homeless programs and \$80 million in one-time General Fund Housing and Homeless Program Fund.

The City of Los Angeles

- Most recently, the City of Los Angeles, led by the Mayor and a 15-member City Council, has committed \$100 million in housing trust funds to create the Permanent Supportive Housing Program. In addition, the City has committed to renewing and expanding the Homeless Section 8 Program, and is providing an estimated value of \$129 million in rental assistance to homeless individuals and families throughout the City. A portion of this funding is supporting a partnership with the County to move families out of Skid Row and into affordable housing elsewhere in the City.
- In addressing homelessness, the City coordinates housing resources through LAHSA, the City Housing Authority and the Community Redevelopment Agency. In the coming year, the City will release an affordable housing strategy that includes a clear and measurable plan for developing units and resources for housing the homeless. Additionally, the City has committed a total of over \$20 million to homeless programs through City General Fund portion of the Housing and Community Development Consolidated Plan. The City's Community Development Department is also increasing access to job training and employment services for people experiencing homelessness.
- The Mayor's homeless priorities include building the capacity and effectiveness of LAHSA and building stronger intergovernmental collaborations with the County and within City agencies. The over-arching goal is to increase the production of and access to affordable and supportive housing, and increasing public awareness and a community fair share response to homelessness.

Councils of Governments in Los Angeles County

- All cities in the County bear responsibility for land use planning, housing policy and development and essential municipal services. To foster regional planning, the cities of Los Angeles County have organized themselves into seven Councils of Governments (COGs). Increasingly, planning for homeless housing has been considered through the COGs, which is a promising mechanism for ensuring regional fair share in the future development of housing and programs for homeless people.